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STUDENT NURSES' PAGE

MY IMPRESSIONS OF SOCIAL SERVICE¹

By M. C. McDONALD

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MINE is necessarily a bird's-eye view of Social Service, because it has been acquired in one short month. It is impressionistic and vivid for the very reason, perhaps, that it lacks the detail of well rounded acquaintance. First of all, I was impressed by the amount of organized good work which is on foot in Cambridge and the number of fine people who are consecrated to the service of others and the community at large. I had always known that there was a certain amount of charity in the city but without the least conception of its extent and coördination: that there is a home, a fund, or a society to meet nearly every perplexing situation. My next feeling was of the great need that all this service only helps to fill. It is hard to realize without seeing for one's self just how sorely people can be "up against it." Even contact with the poor on the wards does not give a nurse any idea of what their home problems and environment really are. In the hospital atmosphere patients seem to lose all personal background.

The reception which I have met in all sorts of homes, just on the strength of my profession, has touched and inspired me more than anything else. I made my first call very diffidently, feeling that if I were poor and miserable I should not welcome even well-meant visitation

from outside. A child answered my timid knock, and when I announced that I was a nurse from Cambridge Hospital, she went running in, calling: "Oh mother here's a nurse come to see you!" Then "mother" bestirred herself to welcome me, seat me in the best chair, and trustingly tell me all her troubles. These people don't seem to look on us as "lady visitors," but in the light of real friends to whom they can unburden their hearts. It makes me want to step warily and not betray such confidence.

For this very reason Medical Social Service seems so worth while and practical, such a direct route to accomplishment. No matter how poor people may be, they are not completely knocked out until illness comes. They are delivered into our hands with this positive physical need, and whether they are ever so shiftless or unworthy, our plain course is to help get them well. In so helping we have an unequalled opportunity for gaining friendship and confidence which will enable us to aid in the purely social problems of the patient's future.

It seems very obvious how much waste is avoided by the Medical Social Worker. She explains the doctor's orders to the patient and helps him to carry them out, while in many cases they would miss fire altogether without her aid. She seems to supply the link which is absolutely necessary to make out-patient work effectual. In the same

¹Submitted first to the Board of Trustees of the Hospital as part of the report of the Social Service Department.

way by planning convalescence for post-operative and medical cases, she is able to return to society useful members, instead of people too weak to take up their work in the world.

All this has been said much better than I can hope to say it, so I shall only add how deeply grateful I am for this month's experience and the broader outlook and insight which it has given me.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

The President of the American Nurses' Association wishes to announce that Agnes Deans, secretary of the Association, has been appointed by the Board of Directors to act as its representative at National Headquarters, 370 Seventh Avenue, New York, to work out the programme planned for the American Nurses' Association. It is unnecessary to say anything of Miss Deans' qualifications, as she has previously served for many years as secretary of the Association. The position of Office Director is being given up and Miss Deans will take over, on January 1, the work which Miss Albaugh has so well organized. It is hoped that eventually the work of treasurer will also be brought to Headquarters.

CHRISTMAS

IS JUST FIFTY-FIVE DAYS AWAY!

The gift problem is already confronting some people, but here are two practical suggestions for members of the nursing profession:

A year's subscription to the JOURNAL will mean to the recipient twelve delightful reminders of the love and forethought of the donor. An attractive Christmas Certificate will be mailed with the first copy.

The 1923 Calendar, containing the portraits and brief historical sketches of twelve prominent nurses, will be an inspiration to some nurse friend.

Orders for the JOURNAL should be sent to the Rochester office. For information concerning the Calendar write Headquarters Office of the National League of Nursing Education, 370 Seventh Avenue, New York City.